



Wine And Wafer As Weapons? The Regrettable Politics of Holy Communion The Reverend Dr. Troy D. Perry Moderator, Metropolitan Community Churches

Seems that every election cycle, there's an unholy alliance of politicians and fundamentalist religious leaders who unite to attack the LGBT community.

Well, here we go again.

In its latest incarnation, there's a movement - an epidemic, actually - of religious leaders who have lost sight of religion's most noble goals. This time they're using Holy Communion as a political and spiritual weapon against LGBT people.

In recent weeks, one can hardly pick up a newspaper without reading how another religious leader or religious group has turned Christianity's most sacred rite into a weapon against LGBT people.

- In Chicago, LGBT Roman Catholics wearing rainbow sashes were denied Holy Communion as they knelt at the church altar.
- In Dallas, Bishop Charles Grahman has recommended that supporters of same-gender marriage not be given Communion.
- Arizona's Bishop Thomas Olmsted said, "Anyone living contrary" to Catholic teaching "should not receive Communion."
- In Boston, Archbishop Sean O'Malley has suggested political leaders who support gay rights or reproductive rights stop taking Communion.
- And taking it to its extreme, Bishop Michael Sheridan of Colorado Springs suggested that Catholics who so much as vote for political supporters of same-sex marriage not receive communion until they "recant and repent."

I agree that some "recanting and repenting" is needed, but it needs to start with religious leaders who have taken Christianity's most blessed rite and turned it into a political weapon against LGBT people and LGBT-friendly politicians.

For Christians, communion commemorates the life and death of Jesus. It is an act of our faith, and is held in common by every Christian everywhere. Now, what God intended as a spiritual blessing is being used as a political weapon against LGBT people of faith.

In the predominantly LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches, we practice an "open communion." We believe the bread and wine of the Communion altar do not belong to any one group or church. The ancient creeds teach it is the "table of God, prepared for the people of God."

And that includes God's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender children.

Because so many LGBT people have experienced rejection by faith communities, families and friends, Holy Communion is an exceptionally moving, intimate rite in Metropolitan Community Churches. For thousands of HIV positive people during those awful, early years of the AIDS crisis, the weekly MCC Communion Service was the only time they experienced human touch, as the server placed the bread and wine on their lips, spoke a blessing, and offered a gentle embrace. By its very communal nature, Holy Communion invites and embraces us.

How very sad that any religious leader would build a wall of separation around the Communion altar to which God invites all people to come.

In October 1968, I led the first worship service of Metropolitan Community Church in the living room of my home in Huntington Park, California. I had seen far too many LGBT people who had been rejected by their faith communities. I had seen too many of our people hurt by organized religion; religion that had moved far from its roots of love, compassion, healing and forgiveness. I dreamed of a church where God's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children could worship God freely and openly.

Twelve people gathered in my home for that first service in 1968. We sang the hymns. We offered our prayers. I preached a sermon.

And at the close of the service I offered Holy Communion.

These are the words that instituted that first Communion Service in MCC, and that are repeated in MCC churches around the world each week, "At MCC, we practice an open communion. This altar is God's table, and God invites all to come. The table of God is prepared for the people of God. You are welcome at this table."

As each person stepped forward to receive the bread and wine at that first MCC service, the most amazing thing happened. Nothing prepared me for it. Tears began to roll down the cheeks of the person receiving Holy Communion. The tears were spontaneous and authentic and came from some deep place inside. It happened to every single person who received communion in that first service.

Let me tell you what had happened: LGBT people who had been shut out from faith communities had found a place where they were welcomed. They were told that God loved them "as they are" loved them just as they were. They sensed God's love and presence at an open communion table. And at a deep and significant place of their being they had a powerful and positive spiritual experience.

Let me tell you what had happened: We experienced the realization of that beautiful little verse in the Christian Scriptures that says, "We who were once not a people, have now been made the people of God; we who once knew no mercy, have now received the mercy of God." (1 Peter 2:10)

And what a stark and sad contrast with those who today use Holy Communion as a political and spiritual weapon.

This coming Sunday, believers and seekers will gather in MCC churches around the world. In city churches and rural churches; in large congregations with hundreds of worshipers and in small churches with 15 or 20 people; in beautiful historic houses of worship and in small storefront churches "together they will share the common experience of hearing these words "as they are" words which will also be uttered in hundreds and hundreds of "welcoming and affirming" houses of faith of many denominations: "This is the table of God, prepared for the people of God. You need not be a member of this church, or any church: God invites you to come. You are welcome at this table."

For three and a half decades, Metropolitan Community Churches around the world have joined hands with friends from many faith communities to liberate Christianity from the voices of negativity and from those who are exercising control issues in God's name. We're reclaiming our spiritual heritage: God is not a God of judgment and anger, but of love and hope. The Church must no longer be a place of rejection for God's LGBT children; it can be your spiritual home. The Bible is not your enemy; it is your friend. And the Communion Table is not a political weapon; it is God's altar and God says to you, "You are welcome at this place."

The Case For “Gay Tolerance”

Third-Gender Relationships in Gaudiya Vaishnavism

By Rama Keshava dasa

Firstly I shall begin by offering my humble obeisances unto my beloved guru maharaja, Om Sripada Bhaktivedanta Tripurari Swami. Like a benevolent father looking upon his son, he has kindly given shelter to this unfortunate child.

This paper can largely be seen as a sequel to Amara dasa’s research, “Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex,” which describes the social and religious position of third-gender persons in India’s Vedic civilization. Some people believe that Hinduism is silent on homosexuality and bisexuality and therefore tolerant of it. Some *sampradayas* of Hinduism are perceived as being very body positive. In our *sampradaya*, we are sometimes perceived as being body negative. In this essay I hope to illustrate how differentiating between homosexuals and heterosexuals is an exercise in futility, with us not being able to see the wood for the trees, as it were. My spiritual master has said:

All sexual attraction, again, is a product of illusion. Thus it must be transcended. If one in a same-sex karmic relationship chose to sublimate his or her love, and in the context of that relationship pursue spiritual life, this would be progressive...Radha-Krsna become the preoccupation of the spiritual aspirant on this path, leaving material passion whether same sex or otherwise far behind. The beauty of Aesthetic Vedanta is that it recognizes that the erotic urge has its origins in the Absolute, thus making for a transcendental reality that is all consuming and intimate, taking the practitioner beyond reverential love of Godhead. (*Sanga: Q & A – Curiosity*)

In this paper I should like to discuss the nature of relationships, how we distinguish their “validity,” what the third gender is, and hence the validity of third-gender relationships within contemporary Gaudiya Vaishnava society. I should also like to discuss prevailing attitudes, misconceptions, and mindsets within our *sampradaya*. Whilst relationships are a product of past “karma,” I will not attempt to discuss how they arise. Nor will I discuss the position of transgender individuals. This is a recognized medical condition, *viz.*, gender dysphoria, and as such devotees should treat individuals with compassion and without judgment.

From Vedic Times to Present

Homosexuality itself has existed since times of yore. Many ancient cultures, including those of the ancient Middle East, Polynesia, North America, etc., accepted homosexual men and women as part of their communities. The Greeks did too. The same can be said of Vedic civilization, which accepted a third gender, as well as heterosexual males and females.

Whether gay and other transgender groups within society should be feared or eliminated, ignored or hidden away, welcomed, or otherwise, we nonetheless find that they have played a position within societies since time immemorial. The Kama Shastra and other sociological and moral texts of Vedic India demonstrate the acceptance of three genders in their society, *viz.*, *pums-prakriti* (men), *striya-prakriti* (women), and *tritiya-prakriti* (third gender), comprising *napumsaka* (gay males) and *svairini* (lesbians). “Feminine gay males were often professionally employed by aristocratic women and commonly served within the royal palace. They are proficient in the arts, entertainment, and most notably, dancing. Their presence at marriage and religious ceremonies was considered to invoke

auspiciousness, and their blessings were much sought after.” Masculine gay men were often employed as barbers and masseurs and served as house attendants to wealthy *vaishyas* (merchants) or lived as renunciants or, if they practiced celibacy, employed as temple *pujaris*.

Relationships between gay men and lesbians were often seen as little more than fraternal or casual love and hence in the spirit of *sakhya-rasa*. Sometimes, though, they were known to marry one another:

“There are also third-gender citizens, sometimes greatly attached to each other and with complete faith in one another, who get married (*parigraha*) together.” (*Kama Sutra* 2.9.36) There were eight different types of marriage according to the Vedic system, and the homosexual marriage that occurred between gay males or lesbians was classified under the *gandharva* or celestial variety. This type of marriage was not recommended for members of the brahmana community but was often practiced by heterosexual men and women belonging to the lower classes. The *gandharva* marriage is defined as a union of love and cohabitation, recognized under common law, but without the need of parental consent or religious ceremony.

Neuters, asexuals, and bisexuals were similarly a part of society and were mentioned in many secular and religious documents. This clearly illustrates their existence in Vedic times. The fact that they were accepted and accommodated as equal members of society indicates that Vedic society had a forbearance that we have maybe lost in this era of mankind’s globalization and homogeneity. Amara dasa explains it thus:

In modern times, laws are drawn which artificially attempt to force all citizens to adopt standards that are normally assigned to the priestly class. From the Vedic perspective, however, sexual restraint is only fully effective when it is voluntary. Laws were used to regulate “vice” by establishing designated areas within the city or town and strictly prohibiting it elsewhere, such as in the brahmana or temple districts. Responsible family life and celibacy were publicly encouraged and promoted by the government, but at the same time other forms of sexual behavior were acknowledged and accommodated accordingly. These include a wide variety of activities such as prostitution, polygamy, sexually explicit art, homosexual practices, the keeping of concubines, courtesans, etc. Anyone familiar with Vedic literature will be well aware that these activities were allotted a limited space within its culture. They also continue to flourish even in modern times despite centuries of prohibition. The puritanical concept of total prohibition of vice is a failed, unrealistic system that causes widespread hypocrisy, disrespect for law, and injustice for many citizens. People of the third sex have especially suffered under this system.

Whilst demonstrating that Vedic civilization recognized and accepted gay men and women in their society, it should be noted that they too had limits. Like all practices, there is a limit beyond which something becomes excess. The scriptural law of ancient India exerted heavy penalties against those who transgressed its provisions. Whilst brahmanas were expected to be celibate there were various concessions granted for different segments of the third sex, but there were also penalties for transgression, for example loss of caste for twice-born men who were caught *in flagrante delicto*. The social codes of the time also gave warnings against certain practices for those not of the priestly class (e.g. *adhorata* [anal intercourse] and *auparistaka* [oral sex]).

Of course, the society that we live in is very much different from Vedic India. How then can we transpose such tolerance to modern times? I hope to examine this next. Whilst it is the purview of religion to advise on the spiritual implications of attachment to the body and bodily habits, religion has only taken upon itself the “task” of advising us on the morals of whom we may or may not love in modern times as *Kali Yuga* has progressed.

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An Issue of Language and Identification

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines homosexuality as “feeling or involving sexual attraction to persons of the same sex; concerning homosexual relations or people; and relating to the same sex.” The same dictionary defines heterosexuality in the same terms. However, in this day and age, peoples’ identification as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or otherwise, goes far beyond their sexual preference. It extends to whom they wish to spend their time with, share their happiness, and sadness, and all the other trappings of a relationship.

In our *sampradaya* we have a particular injunction against sexual gratification, and heterosexual and homosexual alike have to do this justice in their daily lives. Hence, my argument is that this is an irrelevant distinction to make, since both heterosexuals and homosexuals have the same thing to deal with. To put it crudely, we must distance our definition of homosexuality—or heterosexuality, for that matter—from the sexual act. Once a difference on the basis of sexual activities is removed, there is no real difference between homosexual and heterosexual relationships. Both are reflections—albeit perverted, like anything in this material world—of *sakhya-rasa* (the transcendental mellow of friendship). Devotees often view homosexual relationships as “unnatural,” but when quizzed and pressed on this issue, it often becomes immediately apparent that such a view is largely based on and/or prejudiced by what they assume their homosexual brethren do behind closed doors.

A few months ago I was asked: “Can we be accepted as sexual beings?” I responded, initially, by saying no. However, we accept that heterosexual devotees must strive against sexual gratification in their daily lives, so why not homosexual people? In an editorial entitled “Homophobia Is Not Vaishnavism,” Robert Newman has argued:

Those who condemn homosexuals out of hand generally use the argument that it is “unnatural” and therefore give it some special demonic status. But the demonic mentality is simply that of unrestricted sense gratification. Unrestricted homosexual activity is no more demonic than unrestricted heterosexual activity. “Natural” or “unnatural” by social convention has no spiritual relevance; the simple fact is that all lust is unnatural from the point of view of the pure soul. (*Chakra*, August 9, 2001)

When we couple this with Kṛṣṇa’s instruction from the Bhagavad Gita, a glimmer of hope is seen:

My dear Arjuna, O winner of wealth, if you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the principles of bhakti-yoga. In this way develop a desire to attain Me.

If you cannot practice the regulations of bhakti-yoga, then just try to work for Me, because by working for Me you will come to the perfect stage.
(*Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* 12.9-10)

Hence, we come to realize that even Kṛṣṇa realizes that we can have difficulties with things. However, the statement *karmani kurvan siddhim avapsyasi* (by performing this work you will achieve perfection) is very significant. This is a standard to be strived for, as my partner once pointed out to me. I believe that, as hard as it seems, it is something that can be achieved, by God’s grace:

But those who worship Me with devotion, meditating on My transcendental form—to them I carry what they lack and preserve what they have.
(*Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* 9.22)

Some devotees have grasped this concept quite clearly. Another example is Danavira dasa Goswami,

who, when talking about illicit sex in his book *Fortunate Souls*, wrote, “the same standards apply to heterosexual-preferenced persons and homosexual-preferenced persons.” Maharaja goes on to explain that the remedy for both types of persons is devotional service. However, Maharaja then makes the statement that “there is no scope for such [homosexual] relationships within Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Many gays and lesbians feel put down by these one-step-forward, two-steps-back types of statements. Yes, Śrīla Prabhupada seemed to have little tolerance for homosexuality, but I would argue that he was opposed to all sexual gratification, and given the prevalent social conditions at the time, homosexuality was little more than sexual attraction. In order to understand why these arguments do not always apply to homosexual couples, we need to analyze what exactly the *grhastha asrama* (married life) is. I will examine this in the next section.

Because of ISKCON’s (The International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness) institutional reluctance to speak on the issue of third-gender devotees—often pretending, instead, that they don’t exist—third-gender devotees within ISKCON often have little choice but self-flagellation, should they err from the path of celibacy (or even appear to, as is often the perceived case if they are in a committed, yet celibate relationship). Hence they become “disenfranchised.” Just as Śrīla Prabhupada accepted heterosexual disciples, well knowing that they would have to work hard to fight against sex desire, we too should be prepared to accept our homosexual brethren as equals. We should strive to apply our principles with balance. My spiritual master, Śrīpāda BV Tripurārī Swamī, gave this sagely advice, and I believe it is a sensible approach that all should follow:

My opinion regarding gay and lesbian devotees is that they should be honored in terms of their devotion and spiritual progress. They should cultivate spiritual life from either a celibate status, or in something analogous to a heterosexual monogamous situation. Gay and lesbian people have always been a part of society from Vedic times to our postmodern times. They should be accepted for what they are in terms of their sexual orientation and encouraged like everyone else to pursue spiritual life. (Letter, July 2001)

Of course we should not forget that abstinence from sex is the standard that we must strive towards. Not all of us can always adhere to the standards 100 percent; however, this does not mean we should not strive towards them. While Swamī Tripurārī (and many others) recognizes that with moderate regulation (monogamy) we can advance, this is not a free ticket to sense gratification!

What Then Is a Valid Relationship?

We must ask ourselves just what is a valid relationship, and in particular what can a valid relationship in the “*grhastha asrama*” consist of in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The primary function of the *grhastha asrama*, as we have to come to receive it, is to allow couples to rear children in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. However, it is not merely this. If it were, we ought to call it *grhamedhi*: “for a *grhamedhi*, to accept a wife means to satisfy the senses, but for a *grhastha* a qualified wife is an assistant in every respect for advancement in spiritual activities.” (*Srīmad Bhagavatam* 3.2.11, purport)

So, what then if the children are removed from the equation? For example, if the wife is barren? From the above quote we would see that the relationship would still be valid. Should it be the same for gay men and lesbians? Our *parama-guru*, Śrīla Prabhupada, felt that homosexuality was a material reflection of *sakhya-rasa*. When one of his disciples told him he was homosexual, Prabhupada replied, “No, you just need a friend [Kṛṣṇa].” The sexual urge must be replaced with love for Kṛṣṇa. Is it possible that a monogamous homosexual relationship could be just as valid as a heterosexual one? I would argue yes, and most vigorously. If the relationship is conducive to the couple’s *sādhana* and prevents fall down, then definitely yes. Any other answer amounts to unfair discrimination on the basis

of assumption and presupposition.

How then should homosexual persons live their lives? We should examine contemporary attitudes towards the *grhastha asrama*. Within ISKCON during the late '70s and early '80s there was a definite lack of appreciation of the *asrama*, with the *brahmacari* and *sannyasa asramas* being favored. Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that in the householder *asrama* one learns to love others, yet there was in the past the attitude among ISKCON devotees (sannyasis) saying that the householder *asrama* was just like a dark well. Many "sannyasis" that took to a life of renunciation at a young age later fell down. Swami Tripurari speaks of these issues thus:

In the *grhastha asrama* one learns to love because to make the relationship between husband and wife as enduring as it should be and to raise children properly both partners must learn to sacrifice. Sacrifice is the foundation of love. Couples should enter married life with a sacred vow to remain together and understand that in order to do so they must learn to sacrifice. When the magic of infatuation is gone, we are to realize that it was only that, an illusion. The bond between husband and wife should be deeper than the skin and involve a commitment to helping one another progress in spiritual life. In the ideal scenario, *sannyasa* may not be necessary at all, because the commitment to spiritual progress is the basis of one's marriage. Still, in some cases it may be determined that for the benefit of the society at large, specially qualified men and women may be called to the life of formal renunciation, and in adopting this life, teach others by their example and their unique ability to communicate spiritual understanding. In such cases marriage may culminate in formal renunciation, or men and women may forgo marriage altogether.

(*Sadhu Sanga*: The Grhastha Asrama and Learning to Love, September 12, 2001)

Now, as we have come to realize the sheer number and distinct role of devotee families within our community, a healthier approach seems to be being fostered. Just as the body cannot survive deprived of an organ, the contributions of each *asrama* are just as important as the next. We ought to take Bhaktivinoda Thakura's *bhajana* to heart:

"*Grhe thako, vane thako, sada 'hari' bole' dako.*" (*Sri Nama*, sloka two). We like the first part, but we forget the second part. "*Grhe thako, vane thako*"—"you can be a householder, you can be a sannyasi," it doesn't matter! But you have to remember the second part—"sada 'hari' bole' dako," that's what makes it not matter. "*Sada 'hari' bole' dako,*" if you are "always chanting *hari-nama*," then it doesn't matter.

(Lecture by B.V. Tripurari Swami, February 7, 2001)

Conclusion

In conclusion I should like to offer the opinion that the identification of one's bodily/mental desires and sexuality as "gay" or whatever is permissible within Gaudiya Vaishnavism, and that "sexuality" is actually a rather limited term, due to the fact that relationships are not merely measured in terms of sexual conduct, but also emotional attachment, affection, caring, companionship, etc. In this day and age the contribution of gay men and lesbians to our *sampradaya* must be noted, and they should be accorded the same rights and dignity as heterosexuals, as they so deserve. Of course, this essay should not be seen as a justification for breaking one's religious vows (i.e. engaging in immoral/illicit sex, which in terms of Krsna consciousness, is sexual conduct not intended to beget children). However, I seek to alleviate the distress of those who have been stigmatized for their honesty in admitting their own position.

It should be borne in mind that the views and scenarios presented here are ideals. In this world, nothing is black and white; instead there are shades of grey. However, GALVA (The Gay and Lesbian

Vaishnava Association) seeks to present a fundamental premise of tolerance, so we have to idealize to a small degree. It has been recently argued that the gay men of today are not the same as the Puranic definition of the third sex. In a way, this is correct. Most of them are engaged in acts of debauchery, sinful activities, meat eating, alcoholism, etc. GALVA does not really seek to argue about them. As with all things, the GALVA point of view is an idealized one. Just as we assume in the definition of devotee that he or she is faithfully adhering to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in both thoughts and deeds, we should bear in mind that the “gay relationships” in Kṛṣṇa consciousness that we present are idealized ones. The third gender of the Puranas maybe did include those segments of society, who based their relationships on lust and desire alone, but as they neglected to sanction them, so too do we make our presentation one of a celibate homosexual couple, in which the sexual desire has been sublimated and replaced by mutual benefit for devotional service.

There is too much assumption, still as ever, on what people get up to. People automatically assume that homosexuals are promiscuous, or that those couples who are in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are basing their relationships on satisfying their carnal urges every five minutes. If a homosexual couple comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, fully understanding and accepting that they will be expected to be celibate (as they cannot have children)—as was the Puranic *tritiya-prakṛiti*—then they should be seen on an equal footing as heterosexuals. (Of course, if they do not respect that, then that is a different matter... but between them, “guru” and Kṛṣṇa, maybe the temple authorities, but not the general devotee community.) In our presentation people are innocent until proven guilty.

In an ideal world there would be no need for GALVA, and it is true for me to say that my primary identification is not as a gay man, but as Kṛṣṇa’s servant. However, until gays and lesbians are treated equally and kindly by the entire Vaishnava community, there will be a need for this type of support group. Too many times I and others have been called deviants and branded as demons simply because assumptions were made as to our private lives. In one case they did not even think to ask if I was seeing anyone (which I was not), and when finally I am seeing someone, then they automatically assume that he is just some “tomboy” I picked up, not interested in devotional service in the slightest. (How far from the truth can some people be?...) We have feelings too. If you say someone’s relationship is sinful, or less valid, or belittle that, then what exactly does that do? That’s why we’re here.

(From the book “Tritiya-Prakṛiti: People of the Third Sex”)

Selected readings on the issue of Islam and homosexuality

Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, Literature, ed. Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, New York: NYU Press, 1997. Interesting essays from a variety of perspectives.

A good short overview which doesn't assume a deep knowledge of Islam is:

Easterman, Dan.

The Erection Is Eternal.

NEW STATESMAN AND SOCIETY (UK), 12th Feb. 1993, pp. 26-27

and (if you can find it...)

Wormhoudt, Arthur.

Classic Arab Poetry, 600-1299

GAY BOOKS BULLETIN, Autumn 1980, Vol 4. pp.23-27

Note: In Persian and Turkish there is no gender distinction in the third person pronoun. Consequently, many translations have she instead of he. By the context, however, you can tell that the beloved is male. There was an article on that subject in 'Studia Islamica':

"The Theme of Wine-drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry" Studia Islamica, Vol. 13, Paris, 1960.

**Recent short academic overviews are...

Daniel, Marc (Leyland, Winston. Trans.)

Arab Civilisation and Male Love.

IN: Goldburg, Johnathon (Ed.) Reclaiming Sodomy. Routledge, London, 1994. pp. 59-65.

Schild, Maarten.

The Irresistible Beauty of Boys - Middle Eastern attitudes about boy-love.

PAIDIKA, Vol 1, No.3.

Baldauf, Ingeborg.

Boy-love, Folksong and Literature in Central Asia.

PAIDIKA, Vol 2, No. 6.

Sikand, Yoginder.

A Martyr for Love - Hazrat Sayed Sarmad, a Sufi gay mystic.

PERVERSIONS, Spring 1995, Issue 4, pp. 149-157

More material on sacred pederasty in the Sufi tradition can be found in:

Schimmel, Annemarie.

Mystical Dimensions of Islam.

University of North Carolina Press, 1975. 506pp. [See pages 287-343]

and...

Wilson, Peter Lamborn.

Scandal : essays in Islamic heresy.

Brooklyn, New York, Autonomedia, c1988. 224 p. Biblio.

the address of the publisher for the latter is...

Autonomedia

Box 568

Brooklyn, New York

NY 11211

and is available in Europe from:

Counter Productions,

PO Box 556,

London SE5 0RL

England, UK.

'Scandal' is also in some large University libraries in the USA (eg Washington)

**the mythical Hakim Bey translated a selection of the poetry of Abu Nuwas...

Y.Y. Bey, Hakim (Ed and Trans.)

Nuwas, Abu.

O Tribe That Loves Boys - adaptations by Hakim Bey.

Abu Nuwas Society, 1993.

**The work of NORMAN ROTH is well worth following...

Roth, Norman.

"The Care and Feeding of Gazelles" - medieval Hebrew and Arabic Love Poetry.

IN: Lazar, M. and Lacy, N.(eds.), Poetics of Love in the Middle Ages, Fairfax, VA, 1989.

Roth, Norman.

Fawn of My Delights - boy-love in Hebrew and Arabic Verse.

IN: Sex in the Middle Ages, New York, 1991. pp.157-172.

Roth, Norman.

Boy-love in Medieval Arabic Verse

PAIDIKA, Vol 3, No.3, Winter 1994. pp.12-17

**Several books are forthcoming on Arabic homosexuality - see the Lesbigan Scholars Listing (enquire in Listserv list QSTUDY-L if you're an academic or student who hasn't yet got a copy of this vital document)

**Other items, from Sa'di:

Sa'di. The Bustan, trans. H. Wilberforce Clarke. London: Darf, 1985.
Homoerotic poetry from 13th-century Persia.

Sa'di. The Gulistan, or Rose Garden of Sa'di, trans. Edward Rehatsek. London: Allen and Unwin, 1964.
Homoerotic poetry from 13th-century Persia.

Sa'di. Morals Pointed and Tales Adorned: The Bustan of Sa'di, trans. G. M. Wickens. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
Homoerotic poetry from 13th-century Persia.

Yohanna, John D. The Poet Sa'di: A Persian Humanist. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987.

**** Misc:**

Dynes, Wayne R., & Donaldson, Stephen, eds. Asian Homosexuality. New York: Garland Publishing, 1992.
Volume 3 in their Studies in Homosexuality series.
(Includes chapters on China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Oman, Persia, Philippines, Turkey.)

Mrabet, Mohammed. Chocolate Creams and Dollars, trans. from Arabic by Paul Bowles. New York: Inanout Press, 1993.

Mrabet, a Tangiers storyteller, relates a loosely autobiographical story of a Moroccan houseboy.

Paz y Liberacion (Africa/Middle East ed.). Houston, TX: [s.n.], 1989-.
Gay magazine.

Schmitt, Arno, & Sofer, Jehoeda, eds.
Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies. New York: The Haworth Press, 1992.
Includes studies of male homosexuality in Morocco, Syria, Iran, Turkey, and Israel.

****Some anthologies...**

Christman, Henry. M. (Ed.) Gay Tales and Verses from the Arabian Nights.
Edward-William Publishing Company/Banned Books, USA 1989. 104pp 0-934411-27-1 Trade Paper \$7.95

The Glory of The Perfumed Garden - the 'Missing Flowers' - an English translation from the Arabic of the second and hitherto unpublished part of Shaykh Nafzawi's Perfumed Garden. London, 1975.
(Ch. 2: On Sodomy and the tricks of Sodomites)

Lacey, E. A. (Translator) The Delight of Hearts: Or, What You Will Not Find in Any Book. Gay Sunshine Press, 1988.
240pp, illus. ISBN: 0-940567-08-3 Library Binding 0-940567-09-1 Trade Paper
[Al-Tifashi, Ahmad (Compiled by, Preface by); Lacey, E. A. (Introduction by,); Khawam, Rene R. (Introduction by).

An anthology of Arabic gay literature - is a translation of a translation of a translation, so has probably lost something in the process...]

Garcia Gomez, Emilio, ed. In Praise of Boys: Moorish Poems from Al-Andalus, trans. from Spanish by Erskine Lane. San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1975.

Ibn Dawud (Muhammed Ibn Dawud Al-Isfahani). *Kitab al-zahara*. (The Book of the Flower) Nykl, Richard (Ed.) Oriental Institute, Chicago, USA, 1932. 406pp.

[Arabic text. 9th Century anthology which includes love poetry to boys by several authors. There are also translations in E.G. Browne's 'Literary History of Persia' and Franz Rosenthal's translation of Ibn Khaldun's 'Muqaddima'.]

Reid, Anthony. (Ed.) *The Eternal Flame - a world anthology of homosexual verse, 2000 B.C.- 2000 A.D.* Volume 1 - Greece,

Italy, Islam, France. New York, Dyanthus Press, 1992.

[Available mail-order in the EC from Prinz Eisenhart, Berlin - ask for the poetry list. In USA try Ariel's Pages mail-order. New translations]

****Other citations pulled off Bibliographic Databases, which are known to have gay love poems...**

Author:Ibn Hazm, Ali ibn Ahmad, 994-1064.

Title:A book containing the Risala known as The dove's neck-ring, about love and lovers, composed by Abu Muhammad Ali ibn Hazm al-

Andalusi ... Translated from the unique manuscript in the University of Leiden, edited by D. K. Petrof in 1914, by A. R. Nykl.

Pub. Info.: Paris, P. Geuthner, 1931.

Author:Ibn Dawud al-Isfahani, Abu Bakr Muhammad, 868 or 9-909 or 10.

Title:al-Nisf al-awwal min kitab al-Zahrah, talif Abi Bakr Muhammad ibn Abi Sulayman Dawud al-Isfahani.

Pub. Info.: [Baghdad, Maktabat al-Muthanna, 1968?].

Series Info.: Studies in ancient oriental civilization ; no. 6.

Author:Nykl, A. R. (Alois Richard), b. 1885.

Title: Hispano-Arabic poetry, and its relations with the old Provençal troubadours, by A.R. Nykl.

Pub. Info.: Baltimore [Printed by J.H. Furst Company] 1946.

Author:Ibn Hazm, Ali ibn Ahmad, 994-1064.

Title: The ring of the dove; a treatise on the art and practice of Arab love. Translated by A. J. Arberry.

Pub. Info.: London, Luzac, 1953.

****Burton, Richard, "Terminal Essay, Part IV, Social Conditions - Pederasty",**

IN: *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, 10 vols., (privately printed, 1886 onwards), Vol 10, pp. 205-254

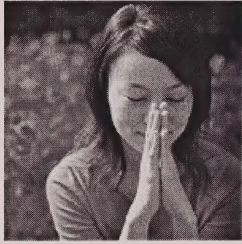
A paper "Beyond the Sotadic Zone: Colonization and Sexuality in Richard Burton's Terminal Essay" was presented to the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) meeting, Aug. 1993, by John Hollister: e-mail bb05246@bingsons.cc.binghamton.edu (John Hollister)

****A possibly useful Listserv list is:**

Homosexuality In The Middle Ages.
List address: medgay-l@ksuvm.ksu.edu
Sub Address: listserv@ksuvm.ksu.edu

**More citations, many of which are for works not in English, can be found IN: Dynes, Wayne. Homosexuality
- a research guide. Garland, USA, 1987. [Cf 'Islam' - pages 156-166]

Faith Based Organizing Takes Center Stage



David Mariner

In our movement for LGBTI Equality, faith-based organizing is taking center stage this year.

The religious right has used their faith to push an agenda of discrimination and bigotry. In the 2004 election, they played a key role in passing mean spirited and divisive same-sex marriage bans in eleven states. This year, however, mainstream religious organizations may be the key to turning the tide in our

favor.

Since the very beginning, faith and our struggle for equality have been intertwined; the first Metropolitan Community Church was founded in 1968, one year before the Stonewall Riots. Unfortunately, our movement has not always drawn on the strength of LGBT and LGBT affirming religious communities.

A recent National Gay and Lesbian Task Force report, *David vs. Goliath*, has called LGBT affirming denominations as "some of the most underused resources in the progressive movement." That may not be the case for long. Just this week The Task Force announced that the Institute for Welcoming Resources (IWR), an umbrella organization 1,300 LGBT affirming religious organizations, will become a permanent project of the Task Force.

Also this month MCC and GLSEN announced a new joint venture to address anti-LGBT bias in schools. The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), a Christian denomination with a special focus on LGBTI communities, operates in 237 U.S. cities, covering 48 of the 50 states. MCC will partner with GLSEN to host 'Training of Trainers' programs across the country to give LGBT individuals and allies the tools they need work with their local schools.

Another important voice in this movement is Soulforce. Soulforce, which just a few years ago was relatively unknown, has steadily grown and become a powerful voice challenging religious and political oppression through the practice of non-violent resistance. Soulforce volunteers are currently in the middle of a 7 week 'Equality Ride', visiting Christian and Military Colleges and Universities across the country. They are taking the message of equality to the very Christian colleges that train the leaders of the religious right.

Soulforce depends mostly on volunteers and operates on a small budget in comparison to other national LGBT Groups. Still, according to Alexa Ratings, Soulforce has had more web traffic this week than larger, better funded groups, like the Human Rights Campaign. Clearly their strategy of challenging homophobia at it's source is resonating with the public.

Finally, this year the Chicago Theological Seminary launched the Lesbian and Gay Religious Studies Center. Funded in part by the Gill Foundation, this Center is our first 'Think Tank' devoted specifically to counter distorted religion and present sound religious arguments for LGBTI equality.

Time and time again, the far right has used their beliefs to justify bigotry and hate. Regardless of whether you are Christian, Jewish, Muslim or another faith; fundamentalists exist in every religion. Their voices are strong. It's easy to forget that the majority of people of faith stand with us.

